

Rear of 84 London Street, Reading, Berkshire

Project specification for an archaeological watching brief

6th July 2023



23e92wb

Rear of 84 London Street, Reading, Berkshire

Project specification for an archaeological watching brief

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The site is located near to the centre of Reading (Fig. 1) to the rear of 84 London Street Reading, Berkshire (SU 7181 7298). Planning permission (190478) has been gained from Reading Borough Council for the demolition of a commercial unit and construction of three one-bedroom flats..
- 1.2 The archaeological potential of the site has been documented in a briefing note prepared by Berkshire Archaeology. In summary, this potential stems from its location within the historic core of Reading and lies on what is thought to be one of the original medieval streets (Astill 1978; Preston 2005; Slade 2001). The town has late Saxon origins but with the original Saxon town located somewhere close to St Mary's Church, which lies to the north west of the site. Several archaeological investigations have taken place on London Street and these have variously recorded medieval and post-medieval remains, but have also indicated the presence of gravel extraction presumably for metalling of the street surface (Platt 2012; Bray 2012). Many of the properties fronting London Street have deep basements which have removed the archaeological deposits. Several of the properties on the street frontage are listed buildings. To the west of the site is the Friends (Quaker) Meeting House and burial ground, which is indicated on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map.

2.0 Requirement for Work

- 2.1 Field observation is required in response to advice from Reading Borough Council. This is in order to mitigate the impact of groundwork on heritage assets, as set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021) and the Council policies on archaeology.
- 2.2 A single component of work is proposed: a watching brief during groundworks.
- 2.3 These works are to take place according to a written scheme of investigation (this document) approved by the Local Planning Authority (Reading Borough Council) as advised by Berkshire Archaeology.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The aims of the project are to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks.
- 3.2 The potential and significance of any such deposits located will be assessed according to the research priorities such as set out in *Historic England Research Agenda* (HE 2017) or any more local or thematic research priorities as necessary such as the Solent Thames Research Agenda (Hey and Hind 2014).
- 3.3 Where appropriate and relevant, the recommendations in the 'Berkshire Archaeology general standards for archaeological fieldwork projects (April 2021)' will be followed.

4.0 Methodology

- 4.1 Archaeological deposits which are threatened by groundworks will be excavated by hand and recorded. Sufficient time will be allowed to carry this out within the groundworkers' schedules. If plant is used to dig the trenches, it will be fitted with a toothless bucket.
- 4.2 In general, all finds and artefacts will be retained. All but a sample of some classes of building material will be discarded after recording. The categories of artefacts to be discarded will be discussed with the recipient museum and the archaeological advisor to the Council.
- 4.3 Conservation on site will follow guidelines in *First Aid for Finds* with any other specialist conservation work subcontracted to the project conservator (see project team below).
- 4.4 A programme of environmental sampling will take place should sufficient well stratified deposits, or deposits of original construction of the church be located. Typically, this involves bulk samples, up to 40

L, but also fabric and mortar samples, depending on the size of the feature examined. Sampling will take place according to Historic England guidance (HE 2015b) in consultation with our environmental consultants and the archaeological advisor to Reading Borough Council.

- 4.5 Discovery of any human remains will be reported to the coroner and, if excavation is necessary, will be excavated following guidelines issued by the Ministry of Justice. Recovery and recording methodologies for human remains follow standard procedures identified by Mitchell and Brickley (2017) and TVAS Field Recording Manual (8th edition 2018). Any human bone recovered of archaeological significance will be deposited with a local approved museum and will not be reinterred in earth.
- 4.6 All gold, silver, prehistoric base metal and any associated objects will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner and county liaison officer according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act (1996) and its subsequent amendments. Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft. No title will be assumed by the finder of any items of value.
- 4.7 In the unlikely event of an unexpected discovery of exceptional archaeological findings, such as extensive human remains or other complex archaeological deposits, this may require an additional level of mitigation to enable preservation in-situ (such as by a modification to the groundworks scheme) or further archaeological recording. The scope of this mitigation will have to be determined in consultation with the client and Berkshire Archaeology. In such circumstances a modest delay to the works on site may ensue whilst this consultation and resultant mitigation takes place.

5.0 Recording Methodology

- 5.1 A single context recording system will be used in accordance with the TVAS Field Recording Manual (8th edition 2018). Descriptions of individual deposits and features will be recorded on pro-forma context recording sheets.
- 5.2 All archaeological deposits exposed will be planned at a scale of 1:20 and sections drawn at a scale of 1:10. All site drawings will be by pencil on drafting film.
- 5.3 Heights above OD will be taken and recorded on plans and sections.
- 5.4 The locations of the trenches, and of all plans and sections will be tied into the National Grid.
- 5.5 The photographic record will consist of digital image. It will record the principal features and finds discovered, both in detail and in their general context. The photographic record will also include 'working shots' and, where applicable, aerial photographs to illustrate the nature of the archaeological fieldwork programme. All feature shots will include appropriate scales and a photo board, the latter positioned in such a way that the writing is legible and including the context number and site code. Digital images are taken on Canon EOS 4000D cameras with APS-C sensors taking 16-megapixel images.

6.0 Post-fieldwork

- 6.1 Finds and sample processing and analysis will commence immediately following the completion of the fieldwork in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015a), CIfA guidance (CIfA 2019a) and TVAS post-excavation procedures (6th edition 2013).
- 6.2 Artefacts/ecofacts will be cleaned, conserved and prepared for long term museum storage.
- 6.3 Specialist reports will be prepared on the artefacts recovered. Particular attention will be paid to correlating the pottery recovered with local or regional fabric type sequences.
- 6.4 Specialist analysis and reporting will be carried out by the following specialist staff or consultants as appropriate: -

Pottery Specialists	Dr Jane Timby or Ms Sue Anderson (consultants) or Dr Cristina Mateos-Leal (TVAS)
Later Prehistoric Struck Flint	Dr Steve Ford (TVAS)

Stone Specialist	Dr Kevin Haywood (consultant)
Metalwork Specialist	Dr David Dungworth or Dr Robin Taylor (consultant)
Charred Plant Remains	Professor Mark Robinson (Oxford University), Ms Rosalind McKenna (consultant) or Joanna Pine (TVAS)
Faunal Remains	Dr Matilda Holmes (consultants) or Dr Ceri Falys (TVAS)
Human Remains	Dr Ceri Falys (TVAS)
Conservation	Wiltshire County Council Conservation Service

7.0 Report and Dissemination

- 7.1 A report on the results of the fieldwork should be available within two-three weeks following completion of the fieldwork.
- 7.2 The report will follow our established format, comprising a descriptive text, illustrations and catalogues in appendices as appropriate.
- 7.3 The text will address the aims and objectives of the project, the methodology employed, describe the basic nature of the archaeological deposits discovered, and report on the artefacts recovered. It will then attempt to place the significance of the findings in their local, regional and national setting if appropriate.
- 7.4 The report will include a front sheet providing the following information:
 - Site name
 - Grid reference
 - Site activity (evaluation trenching, geophysical survey, fieldwalking, watching brief, excavation, etc.)
 - Date and duration of project
 - Site code
 - Area of site
 - Summary of results
 - Monuments identified (referenced to the RCHME Thesaurus of Monument Types)
 - Location and reference of archive
- 7.5 The illustrations will include:
 - A site location plan
 - A plan of archaeological deposits
 - Profiles/sections of excavated features
 - Photographs of the fieldwork
- 7.6 Any findings even if negative will be published as a note in any round-up contributions in an appropriate journal such as *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*.
- 7.7 Both digital and paper copy of the results will be supplied to the Berkshire HER. Non-published report(s) will be made available for inspection or download on the TVAS web site.
- 7.8 A digital version of the report will be provided to the OASIS project.
- 7.9 Copies of digital images will be supplied to Berkshire HER for publicity or lecture purposes (if requested).

8.0 Archive Deposition

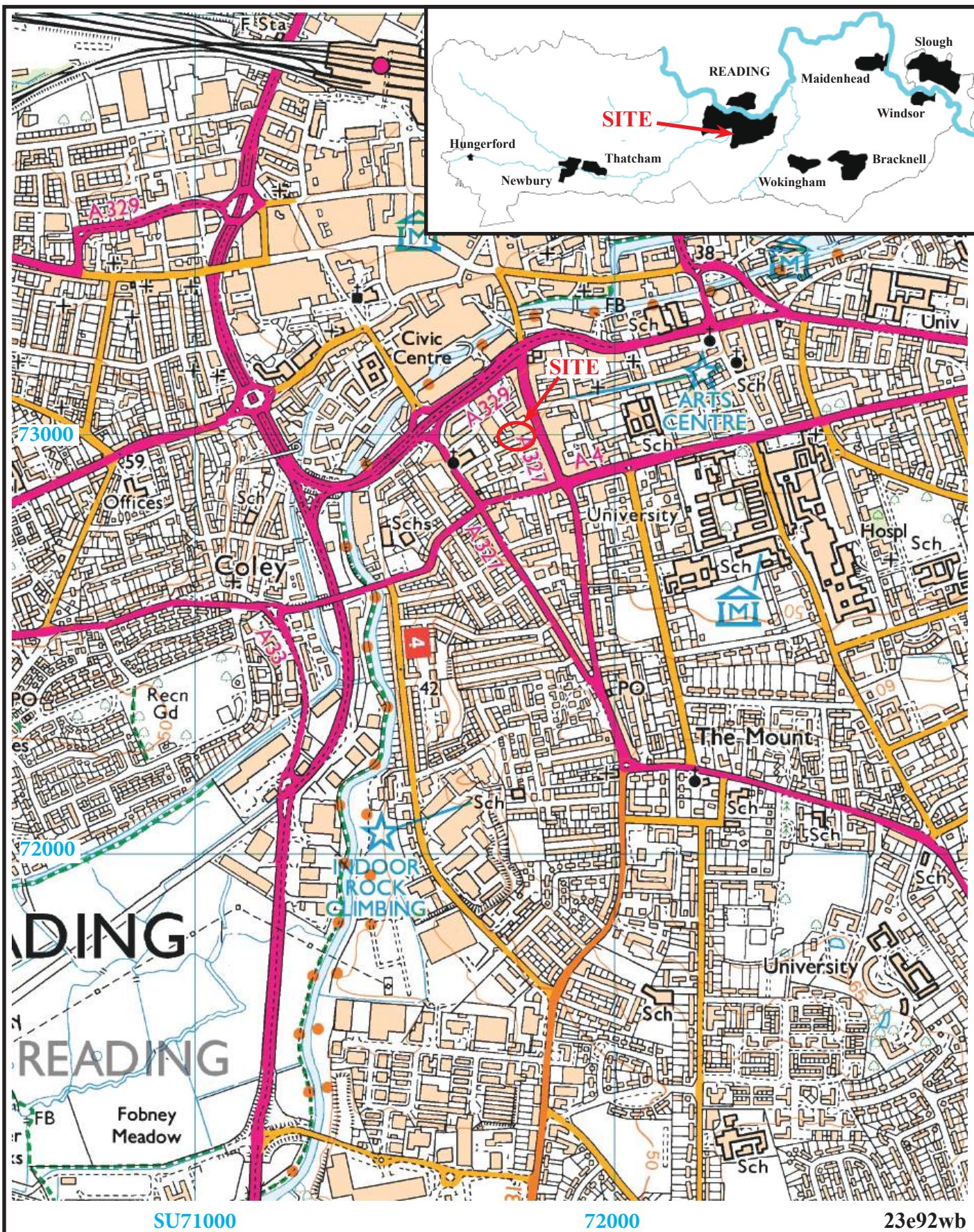
- 8.1 The finds and site archive will be prepared in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015a), CIfA guidance (CIfA 2020a) and after consultation with the recipient museum.
- 8.2 The site archive will be deposited with Reading Museum or Archaeology Data Service.
- 8.3 With the consent of the landowner, the site finds will be deposited with Reading Museum.
- 8.4 The records will be copied onto microfiche for the National Archaeological Record.

9.0 General Items

- 9.1 The project will be managed on a regular basis by a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists with an appropriate area of competence (S. Ford, J. Pine or A. Taylor). The fieldwork will be supervised and carried out by staff of other categories of membership of the CIFA.
- 9.2 The project will be carried out in accordance with the CIFA Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs (2020b) and Code of Conduct (2019) and the quality control mechanisms set out in the TVAS fieldwork and post-fieldwork manuals.
- 9.3 Monitoring
 - 9.3.1 The fieldwork and post-fieldwork will be monitored by the archaeological advisor to the Council (Berkshire Archaeology) and all reasonable access will be provided to the works. The archaeological advisor to the Council will be contacted both 5 days prior to work commencing on site, and during the recording action itself, to arrange a site monitoring visit. Monitoring may take place in person as site visits or via email or phone if an in-person visit is not possible.
- 9.4 Safe working practices will be adopted as set out in the TVAS health and safety manual and current health and safety standards will be adhered to.
- 9.5 Our insurance cover comprises £10 million for public liability, £10 million for employee liability, cover for any hired-in plant, and professional indemnity cover of £5m.

10.0 References

- Astill, G G, 1978, *Historic towns in Berkshire; an archaeological appraisal*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Publ 2 Reading
- Bray, D, 2012, Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire, An Archaeological Watching Brief, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 12/25b, Reading
- CIFA, 2019, *Code of Conduct*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Reading
- CIFA, 2020a, *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Reading
- CIFA, 2020b, *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Reading
- HE, 2015a, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, MoRPHE project planning*, Historic England, London
- HE 2015b, *Environmental Archaeology*, Centre for Archaeology Guidelines 1, English Heritage, Portsmouth, 3rd edn
- HE, 2017, *Research Agenda*, Historic England, London
- Hey, G and Hind, J, 2014, *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment: Resource Assessments and Research Agendas*, Oxford Wessex Monogr 6, Oxford
- Mitchell, P D, and Brickley, M (eds), 2017, *Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains*, Cifa and BABAO, Reading
- NPPF 2021, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)
- Platt, D, 2012, Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire, An Archaeological Evaluation, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 12/25, Reading
- Preston, S (ed), 2005, *Reading and Windsor: Old and New. Excavations 1995–2002*, TVAS Monogr 7, Reading
- Slade, C, 2001, *The Town of Reading and its Abbey*, MRM, Reading

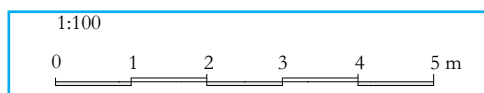


**Land at the rear of 84 London Street, Reading, Berkshire
Proposal for Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site

Reproduced under licence from Ordnance Survey Explorer Digital mapping at 1:12500
Crown Copyright reserved

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



23e92wb



Land at the rear of 84 London Street, Reading, Berkshire
Proposal for Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 2. Detailed Location of site

THAMES VALLEY
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL
 SERVICES